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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2638

INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000013

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C

NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: MAIDOB REBELS KILLED IN JEM INFIGHTING

REF A) KHARTOUM 1848

**¶11. (SBU)** Summary: Dozens of Maidob fighters from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) were killed and many more injured at the hands of their Zaghawa counterparts in clashes in Eastern Chad on January 1, according to multiple rebel sources. The infighting apparently started when the Maidob protested their exclusion from leadership positions within JEM and refused orders to disarm, they said. As many as 37 fighters are believed to be dead and over 100 wounded, according to one estimate. The "Maidob Society Abroad" condemned the killings as "ethnic cleansing" and urged Maidob fighters to abandon Khalil Ibrahim and join a JEM faction headed by Idriss Ibrahim Azrag. Meanwhile, officials from JEM downplayed the number of casualties and blamed government conspirators for instigating the violence. End Summary.

**¶12. (SBU)** According to several sources, fighting broke out late last week among JEM's ranks in Chadian territory following a restructuring of the army by JEM Chairman Khalil Ibrahim. A number of commanders reportedly took issue at having been bypassed for promotion and accused Ibrahim of favoritism based on tribal affiliation, leading to an outbreak of violence. Al Sudani newspaper reported on January 4 that "over 60 were injured and killed," while URF Chairman Bahar Abu Garda told CDA Fernandez that clashes between JEM fighters and Maidob in Chad resulted in 37 killed and 100 injured.

**¶13. (SBU)** On January 4 emboff spoke with Suleiman Marjan, a Maidob rebel commander allied with SLA/AW. Marjan reported that the clashes originated on January 1 when approximately 150 Maidob fighters within JEM's ranks decided to protest what they claimed to be their marginalization within the movement, in particular the lack of opportunities for promotion and leadership. According to Marjan, JEM senior command acquiesced to the protestors and agreed to hear their grievances one on one, but only after they put down their arms. When the Maidob refused to disarm, clashes broke out between Maidob and non-Maidob JEM combatants close to the village of Um Jarah, about 40 kilometers inside Chadian territory near the town of Baha'i. Marjan noted that while ten of the Maidob fighters managed to escape to Sudan, he assumed the rest were injured or killed.

**¶14. (SBU)** On January 4 Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minnawi told CDA and poloff that some of that the Maidob fighters involved in the clashes were recent recruits to JEM, dating back to the May 2008 attacks on Omdurman. He said that after being recruited and mobilized, the Maidob were kept idle and essentially "locked up like prisoners." Adding to their frustration, he said, was Khalil Ibrahim's recent acceptance of (and subsequent promotion of) two Minnawi defectors, former Deputy Commander-in-Chief Bakheit Karima and former Chief of Staff Arko Suleiman Dohia (reftel). "The Maidob refused to accept this," Minnawi said, "because they have been with JEM a longer time and [Karima and Dohya] are new." As a result,

fighting broke out, though he was unsure of the number of casualties. Minnawi also stated that he'd heard rumors of Chadian armed forces' involvement in the clashes. He remarked that he would not be surprised if the defectors--particularly Dahia--were sent by the GOS to stir up trouble within JEM because "everyone was shocked when they joined Khalil." Minnawi also affirmed that the incident may have consequences for JEM because the Maidob control access across North Darfur heading East into Kordofan and the Nile Valley--which is how JEM allegedly crossed in May 2008. The Maidob are an Darfuri African tribe which has largely been spared much of the worst of the violence in Darfur in 2003-2005 and are still generally found in NE Darfur around the town of Malha.

¶15. (SBU) Not surprisingly, JEM Spokesman Ahmed Hussein downplayed the fighting to poloff on January 5. He characterized the incidents as the work of the GOS, stating that the perpetrators used a pretext of dissatisfaction with their ranks to try and escape with several vehicles and foment an internal rebellion, but added, "the situation is now contained." A statement posted on JEM's website noted that "the sabotage inside JEM movement has coincided with the movement of Al Bashir's troops close to the Chadian border in the vicinity of the movement's positions. The SAF movement was supported by helicopter gunships and Antonov bombers to provide aerial cover for the traitors when fleeing to Sudan."

¶16. (SBU) On January 4, a statement appeared on the pro-SPLM SudaneseOnline from the "Maidob Society Abroad" condemning the "ethnic cleansing" of Maidob at the hands of JEM and the Zaghawa Kobe Clan. The statement asserted that the killings occurred after Maidob combatants protested their exclusion from promotion within JEM's ranks. They were ordered to hand over their weapons and when they refused, were accused of mutiny and attacked by Zaghawa (Kobe

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Clan) JEM fighters, resulting in the death of sixty Maidob. "JEM's mask was taken away, revealing its true racist face," said the statement. It added that "Khalil should know that the bloodshed of the Maidob will not pass without accountability," and called on all Maidob to join the JEM faction headed by Idriss Ibrahim Azrag.

¶17. (SBU) Comment: Despite being the most organized and disciplined of Darfur's rebel movements, JEM is still primarily a Zaghawa movement and is not immune to government interference within its ranks. JEM is a lot like the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers: both are led by a Kobe (a Kobe clan Zaghawa in the case of Khalil Ibrahim) who is supremely talented but doesn't play well with others. While JEM is reportedly awash in vehicles and equipment, it lacks manpower, and this incident will likely hurt its recruiting efforts among non-Zaghawa tribes already alienated because of past Zaghawa outrages, and lessening the chances that it can launch another spectacular Omdurman-style attack in the near future.

FERNANDEZ